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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, the fall season has officially begun. The date of this particular season is easy for me to remember because it falls on the day after my birthday. So, not only do I grow older by another year, but the summer is also over!

The other "sign" of autumn arriving occurs at the golf course that I work at for the summer. There's a tree - situated next to the pond along one side of the 18th fairway. For some strange reason, this particular tree is the first "large" tree on the course that you can see the leaves turn color, and fall. It's nicknamed "The Money Tree". It's dubbed that because it usually means that once the leaves on this particular tree are gone, so is the money that pays most of the support staff at the course - and many of us start to get laid off for the season. At the moment, the leaves have turned, and many have fallen. My guess is my days are numbered for this season; and it will be back at the store working my old regular scheduled hours again. My "vacation" - not being on my feet for 5-8 hour shifts - is just about over! Yup, the summer is definitely over!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and this one's a little different because we've officially crossed over into Autumn. Yes, with this past week was the Autumnal Equinox, and soon the days will be getting colder and the leaves will be changing color and hitting the ground... and the gutters. Darn, those will have to be cleaned.

Anyway, for those of you who may not know, the equinox is when the axis of the Earth is tilting neither toward or away from the sun. This event used to be celebrated because it meant that the harvest would be soon, bringing, hopefully, bounty to all.

This brings me to another thing I want to mention... Pagan rituals and their migration into what we think as "mainstream beliefs".

First of all, we've got to understand that at one time, these pagan rites and beliefs were considered to BE the mainstream. Things like the equinoxes were important because it told you when to plant and when to harvest, and if a little thing like a celebration didn't help the success of a harvest, it certainly couldn't hurt.

Now, I know that there's got to be one or two of you out there that flinched when I mentioned pagan rituals. Go ahead, but the truth is that Paganism 'ruled' for quite a long time, both in Europe and here in North America. While Paganism is usually equated with witchcraft, it's not the pointy black hat wearing, broomstick riding, wand waving practice that most of us conjure up in our minds when we think of witchcraft. I'm not here to lapse into a lecture on the history or practices of Paganism; quite honestly, I don't know enough about it. But I do know that Paganism is usually confused with the witches with pointy hats and cauldrons of nasty bubbling brew and black cats and spells.

Now, some of you probably realize why I've mentioned Paganism and the equinox. Yes, that's right, I'm going to mention Christine O'Donnell, the Republican candidate for Delaware's senate seat. She's running on what I guess you'd call the "Teabagger Platform".

Some have called her a "Sarah Palin look-alike", and I guess there are parallels. She's somewhat attractive, she's conservative, and she's kind of hard to follow sometimes. But she seems a bit different to me. I'm not saying that I'd vote for her or that I agree with this point or that, just that I don't like comparing one to the other.

From what I gather, Miss. O'Donnell has had some rather restrictive views on morality. Premarital sex and... self-gratification are on her "bad" list, as is telling an untruth of any kind. She describes herself as an evangelical Christian and.

I find it interesting, therefore, that she has said that she has "dabbled" in witchcraft (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nECxQUi_pr0). Interesting. I'm not going to drone on and on about her or her views, but leave it to you to think what you want to think about her.

Moving on to another topic, I ran across what I thought must be a 'joke' website when I first saw the url "http://www.GalileoWasWrong.com"

Imagine, in this day and age, anyone believing that the sun and all the cosmos revolved around the earth. The full title of the movement, by the way, is "Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right". Again, interesting.

There isn't much information available on their website except about how to sign up for their seminar and how to buy their books. I've taken a little bit of time to look through what I could find, and it seems to me that almost everything this group uses to bolster their view that the earth is the center of the universe and everything revolves around us is based on a... careful misunderstanding, shall we say? They aren't content with using biblical verses and church dogma to explain the workings of the cosmos, but actually bend and twist modern physics, misunderstanding some of the very cornerstones, until it seems almost possible that they might know what they're talking about. But that is not the case, I assure you. I was able to pick out several things that they either misuse, misunderstand or completely ignore, even though I was only skimming the

text.

I haven’t seen anything about this group that clings to the belief that we are alone in the universe; that God decided to create life on this planet alone while leaving the rest of it out there for us to just look at, but I would not doubt that stones would be hurled if you went to one of their meetings and mentioned the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

What I find even more interesting than a group clinging to ’church doctrine’ is the church itself and its outlook on the Universe.

Did you know that the Vatican has a meteorite collection? The curator of it, Guy Consolmagno, was recently quoted as saying, without affirming any belief in extraterrestrials, that he would "be ’delighted’ if intelligent life was found among the stars". Quite a change from the Inquisition, huh?

One of the debates that’s bound to come up if extraterrestrial intelligence IS ever found is going to be religion-based. Do these beings have souls? Are they also God’s creatures, his... OTHER special projects?

Well in the same interview, Consolmagno said the traditional definition of a soul was to have intelligence, free will, freedom to love and freedom to make decisions. When asked if he would baptize such a being, he replied "Only if they asked". Just what I like... a religious astronomer with a sense of humor.

Something else he said in the interview caught my eye. It was about the "Intelligent Design" theory, the fundamentalist answer to the theory of Evolution. When asked about Intelligent Design, he said, "The word has been hijacked by a narrow group of creationist fundamentalists in America to mean something it didn’t originally mean at all. It’s another form of the God of the gaps. It’s bad theology in that it turns God once again into the pagan god of thunder and lightning."

Yeah, and you were wondering why I mentioned Christine O’Donnell and Paganism, weren’t you? [grin]

If you’re interested, you can read the interview here: http://tinyurl.com/3xyouy3 on guardian.co.uk (URL modified by Editor)

I find it quite interesting that an organization such as the Catholic church, which went on a rampage against not only scientists but science itself at one time, is now openly and freely expressing interest in science, and even has its own astronomical observatory.

I don’t know if we’ll ever find extraterrestrials, and I sure as heck don’t know if I’d try to ’convert’ one, but I find it heartening that the church is at least open to the idea that science is God’s creation too. The physics that make everything possible... and I mean EVERYTHING. There’s no need for an wizened old man with a long beard and snowy flowing robes waving his hand and making everything magically appear, fully formed, six thousand years ago. I find it much more... holy to imagine a plan so all-encompassing that it was billions of years in the making and so wondrous in its scope that it encompasses everything. Imagine, for instance, being able to make a blueprint for an entire living thing using only 4 chemical compounds. THAT is wonder. Someone waving their hand and saying "THERE" and having everything magically appear as we see it today, now that’s a card trick by comparison.

Well, that’s it for this time around, friends and neighbors. Tune in again

next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Another Attempt To Block Violence!
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U. of Calgary Adds Video Games to Research Li
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Hollywood: Don't Block Violent Videogame Sales to Kids

Hollywood took aim at California's attempted prohibition of the sale of violent video games to children, filing an amicus brief on behalf of the defendants, a collection of retailers.

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), in conjunction with the Directors, Producers, Screen Writers, and Screen Actors Guilds joined the National Association of Theatre Owners and other groups in a filing that argued that parents could judge which games to buy for their kids without additional regulation.

The case, "Schwarzenegger v. Entertainment Merchants Association," is scheduled for oral arguments on November 2.

The motion-picture industry used the argument of the independent rating system (PG-13, R, and other labels) to argue that a method of self-policing works. Hollywood also made the case that if other states were to follow California's lead and enact their own restrictions, the resulting legal tangle would harm the industry.

"The fundamental lesson of the movie rating system is that a system of self-regulation can be sufficient, without additional government regulation, to enable parents to make informed judgments concerning the suitability of exposing their children to violent or other potentially objectionable content," the brief argued.

"The movie rating system has been widely recognized as an effective means of enabling parents to make informed judgments concerning the suitability of movie content, taking into account their child's level of maturity and individual sensitivities," Hollywood continued in its brief. "As discussed

above, an overwhelming majority of parents believe that the rating system accomplishes that very purpose. In fact, it is no overstatement to say that the rating system has become part of the fabric of American life, with the result that the average person on the street could readily identify the significance of a ’PG’ or ’R’ rating."

The studios then made the argument that California needs to show that the Hollywood-like ESRB game ratings system was "insufficient to enable parents to exercise their right to make informed judgments concerning the suitability of exposing their children to violent content".

The exception would be if the court ruled that violent content was exempt from First Amendendment rights of free speech, a restriction that would eliminate films like 2009’s The Hurt Locker, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

The studios also made the argument that many popular films have been spun off into video games, with video reused from the actual motion picture, which would pose another regulatory obstacle.

Good Old Games Relaunches With Weirdest Apology Ever

The head mucky-mucks at retro gaming site Good Old Games may fail as gothic actors, but they sure know how to grab attention.

Posing as a pair of "humble monks who have sinned," the site’s administrators donned hoods and used a web conference to announce the "rebirth" of their briefly shuttered website. GOG.com went dark last Sunday, accompanied by messages suggesting the site had been suddenly (and unexpectedly) closed. The response from users who hadn’t seen it coming and assumed the site would /never/ go down was mixed, ranging from speculation that it was just a marketing stunt (it was) to outrage.

"First of all we’d like to apologize to everyone who felt deceived or harmed in any way by the closedown of GOG.com," said the GOG team in a statement yesterday, attempting to ameliorate the damage. "As a small company we don’t have a huge marketing budget and this [is] why we could not miss a chance to generate some buzz around an event as big as launching a brand new version of our website and even more important, bringing back Baldur’s Gate to life!"

Today’s conference was all apologies wrapped in faux-sackcloth and backlit by candles. The two GOG "monks" reaffirmed their wish to "express their humble apologies" to everyone surprised by GOG’s closing.

"The closure of the website was necessary for technical reasons," they said, admitting the stunt was in fact a kind of meta-game.

"We are gamers, so we decided to play a little game with our users and the media," they explained, arguing that "there were really a lot of hints" to the contrary.

The company says the new website has been "vastly enhanced," with some "98 percent of the code" rewritten.

"Our development monks have made [sic] a fantastic job," said the GOG reps, claiming the site now runs "10 times faster" and can support "six times

more users."

And then the conference crashed, knocking me out. If you want to see what all the hoopla's about for yourself, keep an eye on GOG.com (there's a timer counting down to 8:00 a.m. EDT tomorrow, September 23, which is when the new site's due to go live). All I know for sure is that the site's remaining DRM-free, that you can still download the games without an intrusive, proprietary client, and that they're adding forums, improved searches, and new ratings tools.

And if you've been waiting for BioWare's storied Baldur's Gate series to reemerge in a Windows 7-friendly package, it sounds like the wait's finally over.

University of Calgary Adds Video Games to Research Library

Those looking for signs of games breaking into mainstream acceptance have one more landmark event to celebrate today. The Calgary Herald reports that the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada will be adding a video game collection to its research library. The new collection aims to open in March 2011, and will include classic Atari games alongside significant PC releases and even modern Wii titles. The report states that it will work like any other piece in the library, allowing students to check out games for research or play them in closed media rooms.

Jerremie Clyde, a university librarian, aims to make the games another piece of accepted artistic media like film. "We're getting a generation of faculty and graduate students who grew up with video games as part of their media landscape," said Clyde. "There's a whole new generation of academics coming in who have been playing video games their whole life."

For only half a percent of the library's collection budget, the collection will be used for a variety of studies, including easier entry into the games industry for interested graduates. "Video games are a fairly sophisticated media form," Clyde said, "so people will be treating them the same as books or film documentaries. I'm surprised it hasn't happened sooner."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Bill Would Give Justice Department Power to Shutter Piracy Sites Worldwide

Lawmakers introduced legislation Monday that would let the Justice Department seek U.S. court orders against piracy websites anywhere in the world, and shut them down through the sites domain registration.

The bipartisan legislation, dubbed the Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeits Act, (.pdf) amounts to the Holy Grail of intellectual-property enforcement. The recording industry and movie studios have been clamoring for such a capability since the George W. Bush administration. If passed, the Justice Department could ask a federal court for an injunction that would order a U.S. domain registrar or registry to stop resolving an infringing site s domain name, so that visitors to PirateBay.org, for example, would get an error message.

"In today s global economy the internet has become the glue of international commerce - connecting consumers with a wide array of products and services worldwide," said Sen. Orin Hatch (R-Utah) in a statement announcing the bill. "But it s also become a tool for online thieves to sell counterfeit and pirated goods, making hundreds of millions of dollars off of stolen American intellectual property."

The bill would direct injunctions at a piracy site s domain registrar, if the registration was through a U.S. company. If not, the Justice Department could serve the court order at the registry for the site s top-level domain. Registry s for the dot-com, dot-net and dot-org domains are all U.S.-based, and thus within the courts jurisdiction. For domains not under U.S. control, the bill would demand that internet service providers in the United States block resolution of the address upon a court order, but overseas users would not be impacted.

If history is a guide, though, the bill might fail in Congress and might not even be necessary.

The Bush administration in 2008 threatened to veto the legislation that created the nation s first copyright czar until similar, less expansive Justice Department powers were removed. At the time, the White House complained that directing the attorney general to sue copyright infringers "could result in Department of Justice prosecutors serving as pro bono lawyers for private copyright holders regardless of their resources. In effect, taxpayer-supported department lawyers would pursue lawsuits for copyright holders, with monetary recovery going to industry."

Things may be different under President Barack Obama. The president has tapped five former Recording Industry Association of America lawyers to key Justice Department positions. And the government, under the code name Operation in Our Sites, has recently seized the domains of at least two first-run movie sites under a process similar to the one outlined in Monday s proposed legislation.

Bob Pisano, the Motion Picture Association of America chief executive, applauded the measure s introduction.

"These sites, whose content is hosted and whose operators are located throughout the world, take many forms. But they have in common the simple fact that they all materially contribute to, facilitate and/or induce the illegal distribution of copyrighted works, such as movies and television programs," Pisano said.

Mitch Bainwol, the RIAA s chairman, welcomed the proposal.

"The trafficking of pirated American movies and music from rogue websites outside our borders is a big business," Bainwol said. "This bill is a welcome first step toward cutting off the financial lifeline that sustains these illegal operations and threatens the livelihoods of countless members of the American music community."

Websites eligible for Justice Department targeting - if the measure is approved - must be "dedicated to infringing activities," according to the text s language. A site can be "subject to civil forfeiture" if it s "primarily designed" as a pirate site with "no demonstrable, commercially significant purpose or use" other than to distribute pirated or counterfeited wares.

The measure s other sponsors include Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), and committee members Herb Kohl (D-Wisconsin), Arlen Specter (D-Pennsylvania), Chuck Schumer (D-New York), Dick Durbin (D-Illinois), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-Rhode Island) and Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota). Sens. Evan Bayh (D-Indiana) and George Voinovich (R-Ohio) are also co-sponsors.

Senators Push for Update to Electronic Privacy Law

A 24-year-old law setting the rules on how law enforcement agencies can obtain electronic records needs to be updated because it’s out of step with modern technology and privacy expectations, U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy said Wednesday.

Changes to the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) will be a priority for the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Vermont Democrat and committee chairman said.

An update to ECPA is needed because Web-based e-mail messages, information stored in cloud-computing environments and mobile-phone location information don’t enjoy the same legal protections from government snooping as other types of digital data, several committee members said during a hearing Wednesday.

"The content of a single e-mail could be subject to as many as four different levels of privacy protections under ECPA, depending on where it is stored, and when it is sent," Leahy said. "There are also no clear standards under that law for how and under what circumstances the government can access cell phone, or other mobile location information when investigating crime or national security matters."

Critics of ECPA have called the law confusing and inconsistent.

The U.S. Department of Justice has asserted that under ECPA, federal agents do not need a court-issued warrant to request the contents of e-mail on Web- or cloud-based services, even though agents would need a warrant to see an e-mail stored on a laptop or a document stored in a file cabinet, critics have noted. The ECPA also doesn’t require a warrant for unopened e-mail stored with a vendor for longer than 180 days, although law enforcement agencies would need court approval to access unopened e-mail less than 180 days old.

In addition, under the law, police need a warrant to track a suspect by GPS, but not to track a suspect using less precise cell tower location information.

A rewrite of the ECPA would help law enforcement agencies by clearing up confusion about the rules, said James Dempsey, vice president for public policy at the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT), a digital rights

group. A balance between law enforcement needs and privacy that ECPA established in 1986 has been lost, he said.

"Nineteen eight-six was light years ago in Internet time," he added. "Powerful new technologies create and store more and more information about our daily lives and permit the government to conduct surveillance in ways or at a depth and precision that were simply impossible 24 years ago."

While ECPA has been amended 18 times, in most cases, the changes expanded police access to electronic records, Dempsey said. Congress has never completed a comprehensive examination of the law, he said.

Several tech vendors and civil liberties groups launched the Digital Due Process Coalition in March to push for changes to ECPA. Members of the coalition include the CDT, Google, Hewlett-Packard and AT&T.

Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith and several senators also called for changes to the law. But representatives of the DOJ and the U.S. Department of Commerce called on Congress to carefully consider any changes. ECPA helps law enforcement agents track terrorists, computer hackers, drug traffickers and other criminals, said James Baker, associate deputy attorney general at the DOJ.

In some investigations, quick access to information such as mobile-phone tracking data can save lives, Baker said.

"We urge Congress to proceed with caution, and to avoid amendments that would disrupt the fundamental balance between privacy protection and public safety," he said. "Congress should refrain from making changes that would impair the government’s ability to obtain critical information necessary to build criminal, national security and cyber-investigations, particularly if those changes would not provide any appreciable or meaningful improvement in privacy protection."

But Baker also said that President Barack Obama’s administration didn’t have any immediate recommendations on how to change ECPA. Leahy and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a Rhode Island Democrat, said they were frustrated that two Obama administration witnesses offered no proposals for improving the law.

"It’s getting a little late to come before a congressional committee and not have a point of view, unless they want to be out of the debate and be commentators," Whitehouse said.

Leahy said he doubts that Congress can finish ECPA reform during this session. If Democrats retain the Senate majority in November’s elections, Leahy would return as Judiciary Committee chairman. Leahy promised to push the issue in coming months.

Twitter Hack Opens Popups, Causes Havoc

A new way to cause mischief quickly spread through short-messaging service Twitter on Tuesday morning before the site could fix the problem, as mysterious "tweets" of blocked-out text propagated themselves and caused popup windows to open.

Shortly before 10 a.m. Eastern time, (1400 GMT), Twitter said on its "safety" feed on the site that the attack had been shut down. It also said it does not believe that any user information was compromised, rather, the "vast majority" of the breaches were pranks or promotions.

The hack had been extra nefarious because the tweets activated without being clicked on - it was enough for Web surfers to move their mouse cursors over them. But it only affected visitors to Twitter.com. Various third-party programs used to send and read tweets, such as Tweetdeck, were unaffected.

The popups could, though didn't necessarily, contain malicious code that could take over poorly protected computers. The White House's official Twitter feed - followed by 1.8 million users - was among those affected, though the offending message was quickly taken down.

Fittingly for Twitter, which limits messages to just 140 characters, the virus may have been among the shortest on record. According to security software maker F-Secure Corp., the shortest virus so far was just 22 characters long.

Twitter said in a blog post it was notified of the security breach at 5:54 a.m. Eastern time. The problem was caused by something called "cross-site scripting." This allowed users to run JavaScript programs on others' computers, turning tweets different colors or causing the pop-up boxes to appear. Some users, Twitter added, took things a step further and included code that got people's accounts to re-tweet the messages without their knowledge.

"It was like a massive snowball fight that got out of control," said Ray Dickenson, chief technology officer at computer security firm SafeCentral.

But while the effects of Tuesday's mischief were very visible - such as the pop-ups - and playful, Dickenson said that he was worried because JavaScript can quietly do more malicious things, like sending people to sites that can infect computers.

Security breaches had been common in Twitter's early days, but the company has since worked to beef up its vigilance and the problems have become less common. Tuesday's hack coincided with Twitter's ongoing rollout of a redesign of its website, which tries to streamline users' Twitter feeds and make it easier to see photos and videos directly on the site, without having to click on a link to YouTube or Flickr.

Twitter said it discovered and fixed this problem last month, and that a recent site update unrelated to the redesign was responsible for its return.

Facebook Is Up after Glitchy Afternoon

A technical glitch blocked or slowed access to Facebook for several hours Thursday, unplugging many of the social-networking site's 500 million users from the constant flow of updates from their friends.

Facebook called it "the worst outage we've had in over four years" in a blog post published late Thursday.

The company blamed a software flaw that caused a cluster of its databases

to be overwhelmed. Facebook said it had to shut down the entire site to stop traffic to the databases. The company estimated the problems persisted for about two and a half hours.

By evening, the site was again running smoothly, but some people affected by the problems were still cooling off.

Jennifer Sokolowsky, a freelance writer and editor in Seattle, was in the middle of contacting some Facebook friends about a possible job when the site slowed to a frustrating crawl.

"I realized I don't have any other way to contact them," she said. "If it's not working properly, that's when you realize how tapped in you are to it."

The problem started about 2:05 p.m. EDT, said Vik Chaudhary, a vice president at website monitoring company Keynote Systems. Over four hours, the site was unavailable to 22 percent of those who tried to access it, Keynote said. Normally, it's available close to 100 percent of the time.

Any stutter in Facebook's services is bound to cause a commotion on the Web. Its members now spend more time on the social network than they do even on Google, which owns the leading Web search engine, YouTube and other sites. In August, Facebook commanded 41.1 million minutes of U.S. surfers' time, compared with 39.8 million minutes spent on Google sites that month, according to research group comScore Inc.

For some, the technical problem upstaged news that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, 26, is donating $100 million to the struggling Newark public school district. The donation is being announced Friday on Oprah Winfrey's TV show.

Facebook is also under the microscope ahead of the Oct. 1 release of the movie "The Social Network," a fictionalized account of Facebook's founding that paints a less-than-flattering picture of the young CEO.

The Facebook outage came two days after a mischievous hack spread through Twitter, the short messaging site. That attack didn't shut Twitter down but it spread "tweets" of blocked-out text to people's accounts, causing pop-up windows to open on their computer screens.

New HP Printer Includes a Detachable Web Tablet

Hewlett-Packard unveiled an innovative line of printers Monday that includes a new model with a detachable touchscreen control that can double as a wireless web tablet and e-reader. Called the Photosmart eStation, the new machine is compatible with HP's ePrint technology, which stores the user's documents in the cloud so they can be printed without the need for an intervening PC.

HP's ePrint-enabled printers allow web-connected devices - such as Apple's iPhone and iPad, as well as netbooks and other mobile gear - to print files remotely, noted HP Executive Vice President Vyomesh Joshi.

"HP is unleashing innovation, and has once again made the future a reality," Joshi said at the HP Innovation Summit in New York on Monday. "We have transformed the flow of content for all customers, letting them access, share, print and manage content virtually anytime or anywhere in

the world."

The HP Photosmart eStation is designed to print files, photos and other content, as well as scan or copy documents. Slated to become available later this year for $399, the all-in-one machine is also capable of sending and receiving faxes, said HP spokesperson Cherie Britt.

Featuring a monthly duty cycle of up to 1,250 pages, the HP Photosmart eStation offers a print resolution of 600x600 dpi for black ink, and up to 9600x2400-optimized dpi when printing in color on selected HP photo papers from files delivering an input of 1,200 dpi. Moreover, the scan resolution for documents ranges up to a maximum of 1200x2400 dpi.

According to Britt, the new machine’s seven-inch color touchscreen, which serves as a wireless control panel for remote printing, runs a modified version of the Android operating system. The detachable device is also capable of functioning independently as a portable e-reader, giving users convenient access to the latest e-book bestsellers and a million other titles from Barnes & Noble’s online store.

What’s more, the tablet-like device can be used to browse the web as well as access e-mails on the fly. Additionally, users can schedule the device to download and print specific web-site content at scheduled times of the day or week.

Like any other HP ePrint machine, the Photosmart eStation is assigned a unique simple e-mail address that enables senders to deliver documents, photos and other files the same way they would normally send content as part of an e-mail message. With HP’s ePrint technology, the user’s documents are stored in the cloud so they can be printed on the fly using a mobile device such as Apple’s iPad, the iPod touch, or any iPhone running iOS 4.2.

Since HP’s new Photosmart printer is designed to communicate directly with the Google cloud, the Photosmart eStation can access the user’s Google Docs, Photos and Calendar from virtually anywhere without requiring a local proxy PC or web appliance. What’s more, the machine’s roving wireless display provides users with one-touch access to customized content from Yahoo’s news, mail, messenger, search and weather services.

In addition to remotely printing files on machines in the home or office, users can send documents to public print locations such as a hotel or FedEx store. HP ePrint technology even enables users to customize print apps as well as schedule the time at which specific content will be pushed to a remote printer.

Dell To Roll Out Second Tablet Computer

Dell chief executive Michael Dell on Wednesday said the firm will release a second tablet computer to compete in a hot market dominated by Apple’s iPad.

Dell made the announcement during an on-stage presentation at Oracle’s annual OpenWorld conference in San Francisco and gave no details about the gadget, its price or when it would hit the market.

The Texas-based company did not respond to an AFP request for more

information.

Industry insiders believe the new tablet will have a seven-inch (17.8-centimeter) touchscreen and run on Android software backed by Internet giant Google.

Earlier this year, Dell launched an Android-based "Streak" tablet with a five-inch (12.5-centimeter) screen and a camera. The devices connect to the Internet through Wi-Fi or 3G cellular networks.

Streak was for sale at Dell’s US website on Wednesday for 550 dollars, but the price dropped to 300 dollars if buyers opted for two-year service contracts with telecom carrier AT&T. Streak tablets are also sold in Britain.

Apple’s iPad has a 9.7-inch (24.6-centimeter) color screen.

AT&T said Tuesday that more than half a million iPads have been connected to its network since the device from the California maker of the Macintosh computer, iPhone and iPod went on sale in April.

A new Dell tablet would join growing ranks of contenders in a tablet market ignited by the success of the iPad.

RIM May Launch Tablet Device Next Week

Research In Motion may use a developers’ conference next week to announce plans for a tablet computer to compete with Apple’s iPad and Amazon’s, the Wall Street Journal said on Tuesday.

RIM, the company that makes the BlackBerry smartphone, has been widely expected to join the tablet market this year with a product dubbed BlackPad. RIM recently claimed the www.blackpad.com domain name, fueling the speculation.

Tablet computers fill a niche between smartphones and laptops. Most models lack a keyboard but enable users to download books and video, browse the Internet and send email.

The newspaper, citing unidentified people familiar with RIM’s plans, said the device will have a 7-inch touchscreen, one or two cameras and Bluetooth and broadband connections. It will only be able to connect to cellular networks through a BlackBerry smartphone.

RIM will use a completely new operating system built by QNX Software Systems, the newspaper said.

RIM bought QNX earlier this year. QNX’s open platform operating system is deployed across multiple business sectors including automotive, industrial, telecommunications, medical, defense, and aerospace.

The RIM tablet is being manufactured by Quanta Computer Inc. of Taiwan, and will run on semiconductors from Santa Clara, California-based Marvell Technology Group Inc., the Journal said, citing people familiar with the tablet’s manufacturing.

A spokeswoman for RIM declined to comment on the tablet device when

contacted by Reuters on Tuesday.

But company executives have said the DevCon event, traditionally focused on RIM’s community of developers, will provide insights into the company’s strategic direction.

DevCon takes place in San Francisco from September 27-30.

Korea’s Samsung Electronics is one of the latest entrants to the tablet market, having struck deals with four U.S. carriers to begin selling a tablet running on Google’s Android operating system during the coming holiday season.

Millions Download Freshly-Launched Internet Explorer 9

Millions of people have downloaded Internet Explorer 9 (IE9) since Microsoft released the test version of its next-generation Web browser a week ago.

"The initial reaction has been pretty overwhelming, and we are very humbled by the response our customers have had," Roger Capriotti of the Windows team at Microsoft said in a blog post.

More than two million people around the world downloaded the beta IE9 during the two days following its release on September 15, according to Capriotti.

Microsoft’s lean, muscular new Internet Explorer browser was crafted to spotlight slick websites and beat back competition from Firefox and Google in the Web browser arena.

IE9 taps into more of the processing power in computers, especially the capabilities of graphics chips that excel at seamlessly rendering videos or videogame action.

A typical beta period for stable browser software would be three months, but Microsoft might wait until after the year-end holiday season to make a final version of IE9 available worldwide.

Microsoft doesn’t charge separately for IE and the browser is included with Windows software.

After Beta, IE9 Needs Windows 7’s First Service Pack

All Windows 7 users are free to play around with beta version of Internet Explorer 9 for now, but the final version will require an update to service pack 1.

Microsoft confirmed the requirement on its FAQ for IT professionals. This is not a major roadblock for consumers, who shouldn’t have much trouble upgrading on their own. But in the enterprise, IT departments will have to deploy the service pack to their users before putting IE9 in place - a more daunting task.

Perhaps that’s why a Microsoft blog post from earlier this week encouraged businesses to install Windows 7 with Internet Explorer 8, and fast. It’s possible that Microsoft doesn’t want enterprise users mucking around with the IE9 beta, only to be locked out of the final version. That would put IT professionals in a difficult position of needing to deploy the service pack in short order.

More likely, as Ars Technica points out, Microsoft doesn’t want businesses who are still using Windows XP and Internet Explorer 6 to hold off on upgrading until Internet Explorer 9 is ready. The company is effectively telling businesses to please hurry up and install Windows 7 and IE8, to avoid the hassle of moving straight to service pack 1 and IE9.

Rich Reynolds, Microsoft’s general manager for Windows Commercial Product Marketing, assured that the high compatibility between IE8 and IE9 will make upgrading easier when the latest version of Microsoft’s browser is fully-baked.

Neither IE9 nor the first Windows 7 service pack have release dates, but the public beta of service pack 1, which became available in July, expires in June 2010.

Microsoft Offers Rewards for Using Bing

Microsoft’s Cashback service didn’t work out, but the company is still experimenting with the concept of repaying users, this time with a program that rewards people for searching on Bing.

Bing Rewards offers users credits for using the search engine and allows people to redeem the credits for a variety of products. To get started, users download the Bing Bar and sign into the Bing Rewards program with their Windows Live ID. The Bing Bar displays offers that let users earn credits and also counts users’ credits.

People earn credit in a variety of ways based on offers that pop up in the Bing Bar. Ways to earn credit include searching on Bing, setting Bing as the default search provider in the browser or trying new Bing features.

Signing up nets a user 250 credits, which buys the cheapest item in the program. There are a variety of items people can buy with the credits, such as DVDs, cookware, restaurant gift certificates, digital cameras and luggage.

People can use their credits to make donations to select charities, with 100 credits equaling a US$1 donation. Credits can also be exchanged for Microsoft Points to make Xbox and Zune purchases.

The program is only available in the U.S. and Microsoft is calling it a "preview," although it appears available to anyone who wants to sign up.

The launch of Bing Rewards follows the closure of Bing Cashback in late July. Cashback offered online shoppers cash rebates for buying products after searching for them on Bing. When announcing the shutdown, Microsoft said the service didn’t get the broad adoption the company had hoped for.

The idea of rewarding users for searching on Bing is one that Microsoft founder Bill Gates seemed particularly interested in. Before stepping

down from his leadership role at the company, he often spoke about the idea of giving people a reason to use a particular search engine.

Since launch last year, Bing has steadily if slowly gained market share. By August this year, Bing had grown its search market share by 30 percent over last year, to 13.9 percent, according to Nielsen.

PayPal Practices Driving Sellers to Seek Alternatives

PayPal has established itself as the de facto method of transacting money on the Internet. It is ruffling some feathers, though, with business and dispute resolution practices that seem to be focused on making sure PayPal gets to hang onto money as long as possible.

Users need a reliable method of paying for online goods - especially from auction sites such as eBay, which is why eBay bought PayPal. More importantly, users want some level of assurance and protection against fraud - both from sellers not delivering or sending items that don’t match the online description, or from buyers that receive goods and don’t pay for them.

With the sheer volume of transactions processed by PayPal, it is reasonable to assume that it receives a fair number of complaints and accusations on any given day. Understandably, PayPal has to be vigilant and act aggressively to investigate claims and resolve disputes.

Some sellers, though, feel that the PayPal dispute resolution practices are biased in favor of the buyer in any given transaction. There are also some who believe that PayPal drags its feet intentionally when it comes to releasing money, because every day it can keep funds in its own accounts is another day it can generate interest income or leverage that money for profit.

One recent case had PayPal sitting on nearly a million dollars that belonged to a PayPal seller. A game developer who goes by the name Notch wrote a blog post on September 10 stating, "They limited my account for unspecified reasons (a suspicious withdrawal or deposit! wow, thank you for that amazingly detailed information), and asked me for a bunch of vague documents. I did my best to give them what they asked for."

The blog post goes on to explain, "My account is still limited. I’ve called them three times, they keep telling me it’s being reviewed. Most recently they told me it’d take up to two more weeks for it to get resolved, and that if they decide something bad’s being going on, they’re going to keep the money."

In PayPal’s defense, this is an unusual case. It seems reasonable for PayPal to red-flag an account that has a sudden inexplicable spike in income in order to protect all parties - including PayPal.

Few PayPal sellers keep that kind of cash floating around in a PayPal account. In fact, Notch also explains that it has been his practice to withdraw his funds each week, but that PayPal froze the account right as sales of his game spiked - allowing the balance to climb rapidly while the matter was sorted out.

But, even on a smaller scale, sellers that usePayPal to conduct business

rely on that income and don’t appreciate having funds that belong to them held indefinitely at PayPal’s mercy. That is why some businesses are exploring PayPal alternatives, such as Google Checkout or Amazon Payments to transact money online.

Intel To Charge $50 for Unlocking CPU Features

On a Windows Vista or Vindows 7 disk, all versions of the operating system are present, from Starter to Ultimate, and everything in between. So, if you want too upgrade to a more capable version of Windows down the road, all you need to do is pop the Windows disk in, let Windows Anytime Upgrade do its thing, and you’re done. It seems like Intel is experimenting with a similar technology... For its processors.

Yes, Intel is currently testing the water with processors that have certain features disables or limited, so that users can buy upgrade cards later on and improve the performance of their processors. This allows resellers and system builders to increase their margins - says Intel.

"Intel Upgrade Service enables down-the-wire upgrades of PC platform capabilities after the initial hardware shipment, offering unprecedented flexibility to resellers. Now your customers have more options with an easy upgrade path for additional performance or features when they are needed," Intel claims, "In 2010 we are rolling out a small pilot program offering performance upgrades on Intel Pentium G6951 Processors."

The pilot program is currently available to a limited number of customers in the United States, Canada, the Netherlands (OHAI), and Spain. The idea is that users buy a computer which has some processor features disabled, after which they can buy an upgrade card ($50) which downloads some software and unlocks the disabled features - double the L3 cache, enables four-way HyperThreading instead of just two-way.

An intriguing concept, but also incredibly confusing, and, dare I say it, misleading to customers, to whom buying a computer is already unpleasant enough an experience as it is. Also, want to bet how long it’s going to take for someone to crack this system?

Moral Search Engines Squeeze Out Sin on Internet

Seek and ye shall find. A number of new Internet search engines created by Christian, Jewish or Muslim entities aim to filter out queries from Web users in a way that is more relevant to those users and keeps them from temptation, alcohol and pornography.

"We think that the other search engines are way too ’main street’ oriented. We wanted to provide a solution to explore the Web in a safe environment, where you won’t bump into explicit content or immoral websites, like pornography," said Reza Sardeha, the Amsterdam-based founder of the Muslim-oriented search engine I’mHalal.

If one types the world alcohol into imhalal.com, the search engine produces results that explain the Muslim viewpoint on drinking. Type in "pornography," and the search engine produces... nothing.

The 21-year-old Kuwaiti says the site attracts users from places like Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates as well as the United States.

"Actually we know that our users are not only Muslims, and once a week we get an email from non-Muslims as well saying that they like the content of our safe search engine and they allow their children to search knowing they won't bump into offensive content."

For Christians, SeekFind offers "a research tool for people who are looking for biblical and theological content from an evangelical Christian prospective," says founder Shea Houdmann, who operates from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

According to the seekfind.org website, the search engine functions by "only indexing websites that are Biblically-based, theologically-sound, and in agreement with our statement of faith.

"That way, you can have confidence that you will find content which will be God-honoring and spiritually encouraging," it says.

For the Jewish community, the niche is filled by another engine called Jewogle, which bears a passing resemblance to Google.

Danny Sullivan, editor-in-chief of SearchEngineLand.com, said none of these website has "taken off and caught fire" but that "it doesn't mean to say that they can't be good, profitable businesses."

But he said some of the niche websites fail, like the African-American search engine called rushmoredrive, which was closed by its parent firm IAC in 2009.

"It was designed so that when you do a search you get sort of an African-American spin on the Web results that you got back. But that never took off."

Michael Gartenberg, partner at technology research firm Altimer Group, told National Public Radio that some of these niche groups are bringing more users to the Internet.

"You have an emerging generation and emerging culture that wants to take advantage of technology... search engines and the things that they provide but at the same point, be true to their heritage... and not stray from their belief system," he says.

Suspect in EBay Phishing Scam Arrested in Romania

Romanian authorities have arrested a phishing scammer who broke into eBay systems and accessed confidential files, including data of eBay customers and their transactions.

Liviu Mihail Concioiu allegedly harvested log-in credentials from eBay employees through phishing scams and used the data to steal sensitive financial data, according to the Google translation of a statement from Romanian authorities.

All in all, the suspect allegedly victimized about 3,300 eBay employees through his phishing campaigns in 2009, and then accessed a database where data about eBay customers and their transactions is stored.

He then compromised the accounts of almost 1,200 eBay users through phishing sites. Along with other accomplices, he also withdrew about US$400,491 from Italian bank teller machines.

In a separate attack, the suspect disrupted the operation of eBay's auction marketplace. The total cost to eBay from the breaches and attacks amounts to about US$3 million.

Romania collaborated with U.S. Embassy agents in Bucharest, with Italian authorities and with eBay staffers on the investigation.

EBay, whose internal investigators have been working with authorities on the case since May 2009, called the arrest of Concioiu and his partners "a great victory" against Internet fraud.

"We are confident that the evidence will link these individuals to a series of online attacks and organized criminal activity. EBay remains committed to working collaboratively with global law enforcement agencies to protect our user community and to prosecute criminals," eBay's statement reads.

It's not clear what type of data on eBay merchants and sellers was compromised. An eBay spokeswoman didn't immediately respond to a request for more details about the case.

Harvard Study Finds Teens Online Lack Ethics

Harvard research director Carrie James took the stage at Mashable's Social Good Summit earlier today [Tuesday} to encourage us all to mentor young people on using social media for social good.

The online behaviors of youth and how to improve and correct them are part of how James feels new media can be used to address the world's challenges. To further this mission, James has activity been working with Harvard colleagues on the GoodPlay Project, a study on the ethical sensibilities of digital youth. The study explores youth identity, privacy, ownership, authority, credibility and participation.

In their research, the team has found that most young people are devoid of ethical thinking or consideration for others when using the web. It's a sobering reality that James hopes to change. James believes this is an untapped opportunity and suggests a number of actionable steps that we can take to change the way young people approach and use social technologies.

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